

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Office of Fire and Aviation
3833 South Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

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To: State Directors

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: Fire and Aviation Operations Meeting

An operations meeting was held in Boise on January 21 and 22, 1999. Attached are the approved meeting notes for your review and action as appropriate. Your state fire operations specialist can provide any additional information and handout material.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Hefner at 208-387-5169

Signed by:
Lester K. Rosenkrance
Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:
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1 - Attachment

1 - Notes from Fire and Aviation Operations Meeting (5 pp.)

Distribution:

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BLM, NARTC
Fire Program Manager
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BLM Fire and Aviation Operations Committee

Jan. 21-22, 1999

Attending:: Al Carriere, Phil Range, Tina Vorbeck, John Selkirk, Rex Alford, Mike Lipka, Rick Jensen, Paul Hefner, Roy Johnson, Mark Jones, Jerry Williams, Wendell G. Peacock, Rosey Thomas, Ron Dunton.

SAFE Initiative - Rick Jensen...Handout

Fire Qualifications and Records - Rick Jensen...Questions

1. Should we keep hard copy records in our files or reside only on electronic systems? Legally, an electronic system can be enough. There may be reasons to keep hard copies, particularly in regard to individuals changing agencies. Phil Range also pointed out that there is no central, lasting method of documenting courses held, maintaining certifications of completion, passing, etc. The student's certificates are currently the only lasting document. Consensus was to keep hard copy files, keeping a 6-way folder collecting appropriate information as Rick listed. This will be included in the Red Book and remain a component of the Preparedness Reviews. Remember these records are subject to Privacy Act and must be secure.

2. Dozer Operator - physical fitness standard for these folks? Is there a difference between agency vs. contractor? Paul suggested that we maintain no physical or position certification requirement, but instill training requirements of FFTR2, and state a goal of the capability to achieve an moderate level. This also includes all required refresher training and PPE. Recommendation: The group agreed as suggested.

3. Water Tender Operators - crew standard and requirements. Tactical vs. support. Tactical=engine operator qualification with CDL and tank endorsement and crew size of (2). Support=CDL with tank endorsement. Recommendation: leave as is.

Location Coordinates UTM/Lat-Long - Tina Vorbeck. Handouts of IB's that drove the requirement to convert from Lat/Long to using UTM's as the Bureau's standard location identifier. All future mapping and data themes will be UTM based, utilizing GPS. In this conversion effort, there is a cross-over capability of lat-long to UTM. Township and range does NOT easily cross over. It will be important to work toward getting appropriate GPS units on the engines and tactical equipment. Tina said that the fire reporting mechanism on the Internet will soon be pro-active with an event mapping capability. **Paul asked Tina to get Susan Goodman to update the GPS Method and tools list and get it out to the field by Feb. 12.** We seem to be heading this way, even though our data collection units are not the same. Roy has a concern that if we say we are setting a standard, then we must be able to meet that standard. Rex suggested that a template to overlay on a topog. may be acceptable to get single point data for field use. Mark asked Tina for a method of converting UTM to lat/long and vice versa for dispatching resources.

FMP Format - Roy Johnson. Handout staff paper from Bill Mitchell. Indicates that the required planning for the most part has been done. In order for us to accomplish implementation that includes “Appropriate Management Response,” we need to develop a decision process that melds the several processes we currently use. **Tentatively has a Feb. 18-19 meeting date to discuss this, 0800 start in Boise. Currently, Bill Clark and Sheldon Wimmer are part of the group. We need field individuals that will be implementing the policy to be part of the group, any volunteers? Let Roy know ASAP.** “Required Fire Planning Elements Group” - Task, define the elements for planning and steps for true implementation.

Personnel Sharing with Alaska - Paul Hefner. Handout for Dave Dash. Dave needs to know if there is interest by mid-March. Jerry Williams indicated that while this is being offered by Alaska, it is a viable alternative for sharing resources more in the lower 48. Should be considered more. Please be sure your field offices see this opportunity.

New NWCG Crew Standards for Light Engines - Paul. The NWCG staffing requirements recently were revised to include minimum crew of two for all types of wildland fire engines. Discussion of the pros and cons. I.e., weight ratios, safety, performance, expectations, etc. Consensus was that the minimum of two is acceptable for type 6 engines but we should strongly recommend a crew of three if weight limitations are met. Units staffing at the minimum must expect performance limitations, and we should be cognizant of this and use them appropriately. Crews of two on the heavy engines are unacceptable for the Bureau’s type 3, 4, 5 engines. The group agreed that the Red Book should not be changed and will reflect a minimum of three for Bureau Type 3, 4, and 5 (heavy) engines. Comments regarding NWCG decisions for change - we need a better method of getting field comments and inputs prior to decision. This one on engine crew numbers was made in the Fire Equipment Working Team; the committee feels that it was an operational issue, not a technical equipment issue. Paul commented that our Operational Committee wasn’t in place then, but in the future we will be better informed and provide a formal process to respond to proposals relating to operations.

We received a handout showing that even Type 3 and 4 engines are to minimally have two!! Offices ordering resources from other units must expect and accept a minimum of two on all wildland engines unless they ORDER ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL. This is a big heads up to Dispatch and Field Officers !!

Firefighter Refresher Training - Paul. Some managers and FMOs are asking that the required refresher training be looked at and alternatives sought to give them flexibility and efficiency in delivering this. We need to look at the restrictions we put on ourselves (example, CDLs; some units are waiting up to one month for the CDL test). Every time an issue surfaces, we respond with more required training. Many of these added courses overlap each other, taking up time, and result in students losing interest. The duration causes an FMO to have to hire the crews at one time to complete training without having to repeat courses in a stepped hiring situation. Paul proposes a 3-person working team to look at this; offered Mark Jones from Operations, Larry Sutton, plus a field FMO.

Ideas: modules, alternative delivery methods, testing out, should be considered. Due date for recommendations is November 1 for presentation at the Fall '99 SFMO meeting. If any good ideas are discovered earlier in the year, we will get the word out to the field.

Lessons Learned: Fatality Fire Case Studies, (1998). Course, PMS 490 (**in print, available soon**).

NFES 2562 Instructor Guide

NFES 2563 Instructor's Reference

NFES 2564 Student Workbook

NFES 2565 Video, VHS, Battles Lost

NFES 2566 Video, VHS, Case Studies, 1-5

NFES 2567 Video, VHS, Case Studies, 6-9

NFES 1077 Emergency Response Pocket Guide, PMS 461, March 1999

Paul said this is a great course and highly encourages the field to obtain it and use it!

Red Lights and Sirens Standards - Paul. Discussion, should we add a portion of the Red Book to address red lights and sirens? Paul did a survey to see how many of our fire engines already have lights and sirens, what the training standards are, local SOP's regarding use, etc. Also are they being used in a mobile situation or only in off road and roadside operations? Pacific Northwest is already going this way, mandatory to all fire engines. If states or local units choose to do this and use them, they must have approval of their own line officer, set standards for training and equipment to meet the local and state requirements, and only use them for the reasons specified and in the areas where they are approved. Recommendation is to include it in the Red Book.

Do we need chainsaw training and qualification standards? BLM doesn't generally need the capability. On a local basis, if a unit or crew does, they should hook up with the USFS and get it. Discussion led to consensus - "No." After further consideration by the National Office, Rick Jensen will survey the field and determine what other agencies are doing with certification and training and see if we can move closer toward consistency with other agencies. He will report back to the committee with his findings.

Suggestion to revisit the Incident Complexity Assessment Process to include Paul and a couple of other folks. Any volunteers? Run it by some other agency folks (NPS, FS, CDF, etc.) Target accomplishment by Fall SFMO Meeting. (Remember that the process should include all fire management activities. i.e., suppression, AMR, Rx fire, etc.)

DAY TWO

Allocation of Forces - Phil Range. Handout. Review of Action Items - In this process, we must focus on what our mission is, what we need to do it, if our workforce can support it, and what our alternatives are. Phil is working with the other agencies to bring them to the table in this process so the final solution is interagency in nature. There were several suggestions to re-look at the long list of action items regarding meeting and holding the Managers' interests. Ron reiterated that the single action required is to provide the AOF numbers to the National Office and

bring the people to meet the numbers. All the rest of the “actions” are recommendations on how to get the numbers if you don’t have enough. The biggest chore in implementing this is developing a solid recruitment and retention plan. Funding is not an issue.

Rex suggested that Phil include some direction on how to determine your percentages. Mark felt that ultimately this should have names committed to each of the designated spots. There needs to be a greater number of folks in the program or coming through the pipeline, than actual designated positions. Define if a person can fill more than one role.

Phil will work his memo over.

Strategic Preparedness - Ron Dunton. Strategic preparedness, as opposed to local preparedness, which we are really good at assessing. We need to be looking at a broader area of influence, a state or a GAC. Is a state ready to handle multiple fire events of greater magnitude? Are plans in place to shift resources in a larger fashion, what is the level of interagency cooperation, how does upper management react to heavy activity in ALL its units? The idea is to have plans in place in advance of the need to move resources from one “fire season” area to another (example, OR to CO; MT to NM.) This may not be based on closest forces. Discussion on funding. Each state has \$100K severity that can be used for this. Initial look is at BLM, though there should be a goal of interagency involvement and responsibility. Recommendation from the group: **Form a working group to look at what is out there, what folks are doing, see what the elements are and look for commonalities.** Jones said to look at the GAC Mobe Guides and work down from there. Rex thought we should really look at where we’re getting our resources and the impacts of them. We may need to examine when resources come on, length of season, and how practical suggestions are. How can BLM’s units become more responsive to the bigger picture? Goals are to define strategic preparedness; what are the key implementation issues that are not already addressed; is it occurring efficiently and effectively; what is the problem today? Mark felt that most of this is already done, especially regarding planning and severity, but bears examination. Draft a common format, triggers for action and responsibilities. **Rosey to lead. Paul will get someone from AK/MT/WY/CA. Target preliminary report by May 1.**

Interagency Fire Management Qualifications - Roy Johnson. Minimum standards/qualifications for organizational functional fire positions, involving complexity, PDs, grades, development, etc. Roy has a draft he’d like the field to test on local units, to see if it has validity. **Due out to field Feb. 1 and back to Paul by March 1.**

Fire Policy Implementation - Roy Johnson. Workshop March 9-11 in Boise. The Ops Group needs to be involved in how this process proceeds as implementation is largely operational in nature. The ability to manage for resource benefits to a greater extent than before can change how we do business. **We need some Ops folks** to help flush out a policy implementation handbook, meeting Feb. 18-19 in Boise. They are preparing a draft prior to the March meeting. Suggestions: Bill Swann, Mike Reiser, Rene Snyder, Phil Gill, Linda Gross, Bill Dunn, Joe Tague, Ann Garland. If states have any more names to add, please send them to Roy.

Work Capacity Test Implementation - Roy Johnson. Due to recent fatality involving the WCT in Region 8, the USFS has suspended use of the test. We will continue with our current process, with no change, unless USFS finds a red flag. If none appear, in a couple of weeks the National Office will reissue direction for the test again this year. The DOI Medical Standards Group will have a draft out in March.

Meeting Adjourned at 1200